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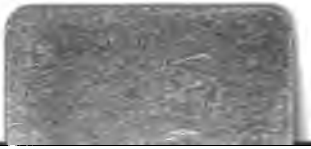

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Prather, S.

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D.

THE

Trailing Arbutus

AND OTHER

POEMS

J601

BY

REV. S. Silas Prather H. PRATHER, A. M., Ph. D.

TITUSVILLE, PA.:
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DEDICATION.

TO THE MEMBERS OF
THE FIRST METHODIST CHURCH OF TITUSVILLE,
AND OTHER CHURCHES
WHERE I HAVE SERVED AS PASTOR
OR PRESIDING ELDER,
I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK,
TRUSTING THEY
WILL FIND PLEASURE IN READING AT LEAST
SOME OF ITS POEMS.

The Author.

The Trailing Arbutus

With breath more sweet
Than odor of wild rose,
A tiny blossom glows
Low at our feet.

Such Nature weaves,
Some crimson, others white,
Hid shyly from our sight
Under dead leaves.

Thou didst salute us,
First not with dainty bloom,
But with thy rare perfume,
Modest Arbutus;

For all around
Is redolent of thee,
The mossy stone, the tree,
The very ground.

From lowly sod,
Thou comest glorified
To shame our vaunting pride,
Sweet smile of God.

Thou hast my heart,
Because it is thy way
To make no vain display
Of all thou art.

Humility
And modesty of worth,
The fairest things of earth,
I see in thee.

The sham of show
And vanity of greed,
In thy fair buds, I read,
And wiser grow.

I read this thought:
"Blest is the lowly mind,
To God's great plan resigned,
Though hard his lot;

"The hero's fame
Is not so fair to Him
Between the cherubim
As a good name;

"And she whose fate
Is life in hut obscure
Among her children poor
May still be great,

"And hear the One
Who, weary, had no bed
Whereon to lay His head,
Declare, Well done."

Permit me, dear,
To place upon thy bosom,
This wee, bonnie blossom
Which I have here.

An angel might
His eyes feast on its bloom
And drink of its perfume
With pure delight.

Touch this shy flower,
And fragrance on thy fingers,
Like the soft twilight, lingers
Hour after hour.

A lesson here:
Thy mem'ry shall live on,
After this life is gone,
Year after year.

A thought here lies
Of resurrection power:
Dust rises in bright flower
Before our eyes.

My soul is warmed,
To think this clay of ours,
Like loam into these flowers,
Shall be transformed,

And from the clod,
High o'er unfriendly storms,
Ascend in radiant forms
To dwell with God.

Arthur and May.

O weeping soul, know'st thou the balm
Which Nature has for sorrow?
Or troubled, feelest thou the calm
Which thou from her can'st borrow?

Go leave the crowd whose minds aflame
Are worshipping Ambition,
Whose hope of power, wealth or fame
Finds never its fruition.

Study the lowly, fragile flower
Which opens but to die,
Or stand alone at midnight hour
Under the silent sky.

Hark to the brooklet as it pours
And ripples through the dell,
Or to the mingled shouts and roars
Which waves of ocean swell.

Observe the dainty wing aglow
With hues, it is allowed,
More brilliant than the splendid bow
The sun paints on the cloud.

Roam through the deep, untraversed wood
And feel the charm of places
Where seeks the panther solitude,
And the wolf the wild deer chases.

Sit on the porch at evening hour
And hear the roll of thunder,
As God uplifts His hand of power
And cleaves the sky asunder.

Behold, like mountains o'er their plains,
The clouds their dark forms raising
And in their ridges, like gold veins,
The zig-zag lightnings blazing.

Enjoy the sigh and kiss of breeze
Before the storm advancing,
And music on the thirsty trees
Of pearly raindrops dancing.

Climb mountains where the sunbeam lingers,
See Night her robes unfold,
Or Morning with her rosy fingers
Crown peaks with ether gold.

A friend, of all my friends the choice,
Noble in mind and form,
To me interprets Nature's voice,
Whether in calm or storm.

The song of bird is far more sweet
When my fond friend is nigh;
When absent, nothing seems complete
Either in earth or sky.

A lovely flower is lovelier still
When touched by her fair hand;
Pressed by her footstep, vale and hill
Henceforth are holier land.

As dewdrop images the sun;
Or placid stream, the sky;
So Nature's beauty, all in one,
Is imaged from her eye.

In early spring we wander forth
To seek Arbutus trailing,
While, o'er the cold and naked North,
Winds from the South are wailing.

"Awake, sweet flowers," those south winds call,
"'Tis no time now for sleeping;
The hour is come when you should all
From your low beds be peeping.

"Far to the North, the icy forms
Of Winter's troops are going;
His breath grows fainter, and cold storms
Are here no longer blowing.

"We bring to you from warmer skies
The earth-refreshing showers,
With sweet aroma and soft dyes,
Kissed from the southern flowers.

"The boys and girls, on every hill,
Are seeking your bright faces;
Come forth, sweet smile of God, and fill
Once more your wonted places.

"Through all the woodland, shining now,
The Sun, grown warmer, kisses
The teardrop from the weeping bough,
And every thing caresses.

"He gilds the morn with rosy hue;
In evening cloud, he settles;
He searches everywhere for you,
With glory for your petals.

"The cows, along their homeward route,
The farmer lad is bringing:
We hear him playing on his flute;
We hear the milkmaid singing.

"The bird is building in the tree;
Softly the rill is flowing;
Far from its hive flies forth the bee;
'Tis time that you were glowing."

Thus while to them the south winds sing,
Millions of flowers are born,
As from the sod they quickly spring,
And all the land adorn.

*** *** *** ***

Again we roam some fair, sweet morn,
When June's warm sun is beaming,
And pure white blossoms of the thorn
In all the vale are gleaming;

When, now and then, the crimson clover,
By breezes full and free,
Is swayed, in billows sweeping over,
Like billows of the sea;

When, on each lily of the field,
A butterfly reposes;
And in the wood, the air is filled
With odor of wild roses;

When, in the swamp, the marigold
In yellow paints the ground;
And honeysuckles on the wold,
In crimson, blaze around;

When, flock and herd the sunny hill
Leave for the beech tree's shadow,
Or seek the cool and shady rill
Which warbles through the meadow.

'Tis then we roam the virgin wood
Where moans the lofty pine,
Or where, to roof the solitude,
Dense hemlocks intertwine.

In the dim light among the boughs,
The owl, safe-sheltered, dozes;
While underneath his perch, the grouse
On mossy log reposes.

Sullen, upon his native tree,
He sits, no creature with him;
He scorns the songbird's minstrelsy,
But loves the brook's low rhythm.

A soothing silence reigns around;
No voice in all the trees;
No bird's light footstep on the ground;
No whispering of the breeze;

No sound, save the low murmurings
Of the clear brook, is heard;
And while alone it softly sings,
Our hearts are deeply stirred.

A mouldering log, enrobed in moss,
Bridges the purling stream;
And on its velvet, half across,
We sit and think and dream.

Reflected from the crystal brook,
On mossy log below,
Two mortals sit with dreamy look;
And lovers they are we know.

As smoothly glide the waters by
Inverted shrub and tree,
The wide expanse of mirrored sky
Looks like a deep blue sea.

This is the place for perfect rest
From every worldly care;
The place for worship at our best;
The place for silent prayer.

We feel, while sweet emotions bound,
This is a holy hour,
The angel world is all around,
And Love its mighty power.

Our eyes are on the visible;
Our minds, on the unseen;
And thoughts we have no power to tell
Into our spirits gleen.

Beneath our feet the brook is wide
And slow and deep and level;
But just below, its waters glide
And babble o'er the gravel.

Its chorus has the blended sound
Of more than twenty rills,
Which bubble up from sandy ground
Or gush forth from the hills.

We sit and muse until we hear
The part which each rill sings,
As off it glides or ripples near
In its meanderings.

They sing of stormy days gone by,
When, in the form of spray,
They fought the dark and raging sky,
On ocean far away.

Again they sing of blessed rest,
When storm has ceased to sweep,
Glinting the sun low in the west,
As kissed by him to sleep.

They sing how on the lily's head,
Ambrosia is distilled;
And how the clover, white and red,
Is with its nectar filled.

They sing of evening's saffron shroud
Fading to sombre grey,
And of the fiery crimson cloud
Which flames at break of day.

They sing of gently falling shower
Upon the fields of grain;
Of patting on the roof, with power
To soothe the restless brain;

Of weighting clouds until they broke
In waterspouts to pour,
And overflowed each creek and woke
The river's thundering roar.

Thus onward, ever onward, gliding,
The brook purls cheerfully;
And never for a moment biding,
It hastens to the sea.

In this it is like us, my friend;
Though now in youth's full bloom,
Adown life's stream we swift descend;
Our ocean is the tomb.

But on a near or distant day,
These waters will arise
From ocean billows far away,
And mount again the skies.

And so shall we, beyond the grave,
Another life attain;
We'll sail upon the crystal wave
And know and love and reign.

From shadows of the western hills,
We see the sun is low;
We break the spell of laughing rills,
And slowly homeward go.

We feel the presence of that Power
Who all else underlies,
Whose fingers trace the wayside flower
And paint its brilliant dyes;

Who gives the angels their command;
And reaching out afar,
Along its course, with careful hand,
Guides the most distant star.

The Universe, be it avowed,
Is laid on Reason's lines;
And Nature is the fiery cloud
Through which Jehovah shines.

Eventide.

The day is gone; and yonder
The red sun, taking leave,
Sinks our horizon under,
And—lo, the hush of eve.

A stream of splendor flushes
Cloud ships, which anchored lie;
And, in fiery crimson blushes,
Flames all the western sky.

Beyond those blazing fringes,
Beyond the evening star,
Upon its golden hinges,
The pearl gate swings ajar.

I see God's holy nation;
His throne above all thrones;
The City whose foundation
Is built of precious stones.

Down through the opened portal,
Mansions of sapphire shine,
Whose occupants immortal
Sip sweet ambrosial wine.

Afar the holy mountains
Loom high o'er spicy hills;
And from them, living fountains
Flow down in laughing rills.

Archangel hosts are riding
In chariots of gold,
Their winged war steeds guiding,
Like Grecian gods of old.

A great exploit impelling,
They fly to realms afar,
To thwart a world rebelling,
Or set a new-made star.

A white-winged ship is sailing
Over the Crystal Sea;
And, leaning o'er the railing,
A fair form beckons me.

Though robed she is in splendor,
Too bright for mortal eye,
Her meek heart is as tender
As in the years gone by.

The stately ship is gliding
Smoothly the waters o'er,
Her diamond prow dividing
The limpid wave before.

I hear, methinks, the singing
And harping of a band;
While tones of a deep bell ringing
Throb from the distant land.

*** *** *** ***

The clouds, no longer blazing
Like isles of amethyst,
Their thunder-peaks are raising
Along the darkling west.

The stars, into their places,
Are coming one by one,
With glory-beaming faces,
Like children of the sun.

The babbling brook rejoices
O'er hush of singing bird;
And wierd enchanting voices
Of sable Night are heard.

The mellow moonbeam shimmers
In the quivering poplar spray,
And a royal highway glimmers
Where the queen sails up the bay.

The near light and the far light,
My window and the moon,
The gleaming bay and the star-light,
Have waked me all too soon.

Gone are the scenes before me;
The angel world is gone;
The night wind sighs; and o'er me,
The flaming stars march on.

The Old Homestead.

The soft zephyr comes
The blooming vale over;
And, in the white clover,
The busy bee hums.

The air is alive
With honeycomb makers,
For acres and acres,
Around the old hive.

'Tis plain to be seen,
A new kingdom is forming,
And its subjects are swarming
Around their young queen.

On a bough, just above
Some wild roses blooming,
There sits, her wings pluming,
A lone turtle dove.

But where the pine moans,
I hear her mate calling,
A pensive bird, drawling
In smooth, solemn tones.

O'er clearing and wood,
Fly flocks of wild pigeons,
Which scour the wide regions
For a morsel of food.

No shelter they know;
For huntsmen, them baiting,
In ambush are waiting,
Wherever they go.

On a chestnut tree near,
A red squirrel, frisking
And scolding, is risking
His life to be here.

But do him no harm:
He is not to be blamed;
For his forefathers claimed
A right in this farm,

Long ages before
The sturdy fur-vender
Had gazed on the splendor
This valley then wore.

The proud pheasant drums
On mossy log yonder;
And, as low distant thunder,
The muffled sound comes.

'Tis a sure sign of rain,
A warm gentle shower
To bathe the bright flower
And cheer all the plain.

Perched high on a rail,
To watch the intruding
Upon his mate brooding,
"Bob White," pipes the quail.

His kind only knows
What mean his shrill words,
And whether, to birds
Addressed, or to foes.

On a low-bending reed,
A young lark is swinging;
And others are winging
Across the green mead.

So cheerful and free,
They borrow no trouble
From fear a hard stubble
The mead will soon be.

The thrush, in sweet trills,
Her glad song is pouring;
And the grey hawk is soaring
High over the hills.

Swift humming birds dart
Around the sweet brier,
Which glows like the fire
In the old chimney's heart.

With a buzz and a gleam
And a sip of the nectar,
They are gone, like a specter,
We see in a dream.

A spring glides away
From 'neath a great boulder,
A stream which seems colder
The warmer the day.

It ripples, and laves
Young cowslips and cresses,
And wafts their fair tresses
On cool, limpid waves.

Below, winds about
A brook through the meadow,
Where tall willows shadow
The shy graceful trout.

And farther along,
'Neath hemlocks o'erspreading,
The vale it is threading,
With sweet purling song.

'Tis a song of the rills
Which come from bright fountains
Upon the green mountains
Beyond the green hills.

A wind o'er the lea
Now sways the red clover,
In waves sweeping over,
Like waves of the sea.

I love the bright scene,
The rocking and dancing
And seeming advancing
Of crimson and green.

The army of blooms
Right onward seem gliding—
Ten thousand knights riding
And nodding their plumes.

With sway to and fro,
The tall lily dozes,
Or kisses the roses,
Sweet blushing below.

What beauty and worth
And fragrance of blossom
Come forth from the bosom
Of old Mother Earth!

O wonderful sod!
Where Life is selecting
Her forms for reflecting
The smile of our God.

The soil is the loom;
And Life, the skilled weaver,
And Man, the receiver
Of nature in bloom.

Now, since the frail flower
The Father hath traced
And perfumed and graced,
To blush a brief hour·

Will He not glorify
His child, all immortal,
And open the portal
For him to the sky!

The Summer Shower.

There has not fallen a drop of rain
For weeks upon the land;
The leaves are withered; flowers, drooped,
By parching breezes fanned;
And to the world of verdure, Death
Seems even now at hand.

But no; for in the west, a cloud
Swells black in mountain form;
The vivid flare and rumbling roar
Signal an awful storm,
Flaming with wrath and charged with power
Its mission to perform.

Small whirlwinds, dashing to and fro,
Are scouting everywhere,
And whirling dust and wrested leaves
Through all the whistling air;
And frightened birds are flying fast
To shelter here and there.

With blazing flags, yon army comes,
Loud pealing the alarm;
Trees writhe and wrestle, moan and groan
Beneath its powerful arm;
And blinding flash and deafening crash
Startle our fears of harm.

Bolt after bolt, the Thunderer
Does in his right hand raise;
It rives the welken, shakes the ground,
Fills mortals with amaze,
And roars and rolls, while flash on flash
Keeps all the heaven ablaze.

The ocean rising to the skies
Has overleaped the shore;
And clouds, like dread Niagara,
Their seething torrents pour;
While driving wind and rushing flood
Muffle the thunder's roar.

The crimson clover and the maize,
Late withering, are not seen;
For all the flat is one vast lake,
Wide spreading o'er the green,
Without a daisy or wild rose
To deck the silvery sheen.

A few hours later, what a change!
The earth has stored the rain
In reservoirs deep under ground
To feed the springs again;
And the surplus water brims along
The river to the main.

The maple, with ten thousand lips,
Is sipping from the soil;
The tender corn stands up and smiles,
Improved by the turmoil;
And out among more fragrant flowers,
The bee flies forth to toil.

Safe from their hiding, come the birds
To sing sweet roundelays;
Soft breezes fan the laughing trees;
And sheep and oxen graze
With gratitude; and Nature all
Is redolent with praise.

*** *** *** ***

Ease, undisturbed, is oft a drought
Which wilts and sears the soul;
Ambition builds beneath the stars;
The flesh is in control;
And all unheeded or unheard,
The Sinai thunders roll.

Fortune, who long had rosy smiles,
Assumes an angry frown;
For wealth takes wing and flies away,
Or health is broken down;
Or laurel wreath which graced the brow
Gives place to thorny crown.

Yes, angry clouds o'erspread the sky,
And awful thunders roar;
Both wind and wave besiege the soul;
But soon their wrath is o'er;
And suddenly there comes a peace
Which was not known before.

The Lord into His garden comes,
Finds graces blooming there,
Because a storm has washed the face
Of rose and lily fair,
And lashed the trees and swept the sky
And purified the air.

The Spirit witnesses with ours,
    We are the sons of God,
And royal heirs with Jesus Christ,
    If we endure the rod
And climb the steep and rugged way
    Whereon the Master trod.

After Harvest.

Over the globe
In many a graceful fold,
Trails, glittering with gold,
Rich Autumn's robe.

The birds that sing
At ope and shut of day,
To southlands far away
Have taken wing.

With hungry eye,
Where late the waving grain
Made golden all the plain,
Wild pigeons fly.

Yet no complaint
They pipe into the air,
Although the ground is bare
And they are faint.

The crow alone
His noisy throat intrudes,
And wakes the silent woods
With rasping tone.

I hear and see
The grouse's whirring wing,
And the squirrel's nimble spring
From tree to tree.

Where'er the plow
Unbroken left the sod,
The flaming goldenrod
Makes graceful bow.

Though in the trees,
No more the song of bird;
Yet 'mong these flowers is heard
The hum of bees,

In soothing tones,
As those of purling rill,
Flowing beneath the hill
O'er pebble stones.

On every hand,
Fringing the meadow stream,
Bright yellow daisies gleam
And paint the land.

They bend at times
Before the passing breeze,
Like saints upon their knees
At evening chimes.

They rise and yield
In many a graceful wave—
A golden lake to lave
Field after field.

AFTER THE FROST.

Frost fell amain,
And the flowers of yesterday
Have all fled swift away
From wood and plain.

Kissed by the breeze,
The chestnut, plump and brown,
Comes rattling, thumping down
From lofty trees.

On yonder crags,
Out of the sombre haze,
Sumac and maple blaze
Like crimson flags.

Along the river
And down the deep ravine,
The hemlock stands as green
And dense as ever.

But on each hand,
Swell hills of red and gold
Where glories manifold
Emblaze the land.

Among the trees,
A pensive wind is sighing;
And gaudy leaves are flying
On every breeze.

And as they fly,
They tell the old, old tale,
How mortals are but frail
And soon must die.

A moment brief,
And from the quivering spray
Breaks off and falls away
The strongest leaf.

And as Decay
The tree will soon efface,
So all the human race
Will pass away.

So let it be,
For Life will burst its tomb;
The rose again will bloom—
So let it be;

And some glad day,
Where blossoms never wither
On trees ambrosial—thither
We'll make our way.

The Early Snow.

Only yesterday the maples spread with gold the ground below;
And today the hoary winter scatters down the feathery snow.

Out on mountain and in valley, on the farm and in the town,
With a flutter soft as cherub's wing, great flakes are floating down.

Other sounds are hushed to silence; and the kisses of the breeze
Are too faint in all the forest to give motion to the trees.

Shrubs of pine in robes of ermine bow themselves like saints in prayer,
While, like angels hovering o'er them, soft white forms fill all the air.

On the mansion of the wealthy and the palace of the king,
On the wigwam of the Red Man in deep forest sheltering,

On the vine-entangled thicket, haunt of fox and home of hare,
On the silent wildernesses where the panther has her lair,

And on lake and laughing river, though the water buries all,
Wafting, plunging, hesitating, winter's pure white blossoms fall.

O, I love to look aloft and watch the crumbling, tumbling snow,
For the while I gaze there come again the days of long ago;

And I wish I were a child, untaught and innocent, once more,
Having Nature for my teacher with the charms she had of yore,

When her every phase delighted my untrained and wondering eye,
And I thought the snowflakes fairies promenading through the sky.

But my soul, sigh not for childhood's time; eternity is vast;
And the present, all considered, is e'en better than the past;

And the future better still; the golden age is on before,
For the pathway of the just shines on forever more and more.

So we leave the past and present; onward, upward, homeward go
To the land where saints are robed in garments whiter than the snow.

Yesterday, To-day and Forever.

From th' unbeginning, Night supreme
Reigned in immensity alone;
For Day, unborn, had cast no gleam
On her black throne.

Angels, if not then increate,
Fanned through dark space with ebon wing,
Around th' eternal throne, to wait
On their great King.

A thought too great for human mind:
What lacked beginning passed away,
When non-beginning Night resigned
Her sovereign sway.

Then Elohim, before whose face
Eternity had dwelt in Night,
Proclaimed His fiat through all space,
"Let there be light;"

And suddenly as lightning's flare
Reveals the form of midnight cloud,
The golden shafts sped everywhere
With worlds endowed.

It may be, angels swept the skies
Close in the wake of fleeing Night,
And found themselves, to their surprise,
Enrobed in white;

While loud and clear their voices rang
With hallelujahs unto God,
And sweet the glowing ether sang,
Streaming abroad.

Condensing fire-mist formed the stars,
That blazing chandelier of God;
And Day his shafts, from those bright cars,
Now hurls abroad.

Millions of years those suns have shone,
And millions more they yet may shine,
Before they, at God's awful throne,
Their fires resign.

Yet temporal are the things we see;
And every orb that spins in space
Will fall before a stern decree
From out its place.

The Earth will plunge into the Sun;
The Sun will crash on Alcyone;
All systems will, their long race run,
Be overthrown.

The staggering galaxies will fall
And, into one great volume, roll—
The Universe in one great ball,
A finished scroll.

But endless are the things unseen:
The soul, worth more than stars are worth,
Will live to see a fairer green
Than that of Earth.

A brighter sun will rise than ours;
A grander world will heave in view,
With bluer skies and sweeter flowers,
And all things new.

A river from the throne of God,
With trees of life on either hand,
Will pour its living streams abroad
Through all the land;

And we shall linger on its brink,
Converse about the days of old—
These days—and drink, where seraphs drink,
From cups of gold.

On spicy mount, in blooming vale,
Where foes of no sort ever roam,
We often shall each other hail
In that sweet home.

Fullness of life we then shall know,
With rapture then our hearts will thrill,
When we shall pluck the fruits which grow
On Zion's hill.

No threatening cloud will there appear;
No chilling wind will fan the sky;
And God will wipe away the tear
From every eye.

Eleanor.

Just over the way, in a window,
A modest young woman I see;
And somehow I fear she is dreaming
Of things which are never to be.

The mountain swells high in the distance;
The river glides smoothly below;
And yet the bright landscape before her
Has not her attention, I know.

Come thou from her presence and tell me,
Thou purest of muses, tell why
Emotion wells up in her bosom
And gives such a depth to her eye.

She dreams of a day which is over,
Of one which she yet hopes to see,
A day when a promise was given,
A day when fulfilled it may be;

For artless and pure as Rebekah,
Her heart has been won by a friend
Who pledges to wed and to love her,
Till death their sweet union shall end.

But O, how uncertain the future!
How fickle in heart are some men!
How many a beautiful woman
Has loved and been loved all in vain!

But who could forego such a treasure
As Helen in rapture of love,
No wife could he find that would please him,
On Earth or in Heaven above.

A prayer for the realization
Of all her fond hopes I record,
If such be the best; if it be not,
Sustained may she be by the Lord.

The Harvest Home.

My friends, we are gathered to rest from our labors
Beneath these great trees with their wide reaching arms,
To hear brief addresses, and eat with our neighbors
Around one long table the fruits of our farms.

The children are with us, the dearest of creatures,
As happy as robins which sing in the gloam.
They run, swing, and cheer to give vent to their natures,
Untrammeled by "don'ts" which restrain them at home.

A picnic, methinks, without children resembles
A springtime which has neither songbird nor flower;
A night in whose sky no star ever trembles;
A summer which knows neither dewdrop nor shower.

O innocent children! we joy in your romping
Around here among us and farther beyond
Where, bridging and splashing and wading and swamping,
You pluck the white lilies which grow in the pond.

May God bless you now in your life's early morning
And lead you along where the smooth waters flow.
Of Satan's device may you have ample warning,
That the bad you may shun and the good only know.

*** *** *** ***

The maiden is here on the arm of her lover
Attempting to listen to what I may teach.
Her eye is as deep as the deep sky above her;
Her cheek has the down and the rose of the peach.

How fondly her lover is looking upon her,
While twisting his mustache into a hook!
He's thinking of fishing—he is upon honor—
He's thinking of fishing and catching a cook.

But, being no prophet, I can not tell whether
The fish he is baiting is going to bite;
And yet I feel certain, from what I can gather,
Mustaches full often catch fishes at night.

Enkindled by hope his eye often flashes
The lightning which tells of his mind's latent power.
Mad Ocean its billows around him oft dashes:
We hope he prevails in temptation's dark hour.

For help which he needs he may look to the mountains
And know that his help cometh down from the Lord:
The thirst of his soul he may slake from the fountains
Of wisdom and truth which are found in God's Word.

But since I avow a desire to be truthful,
Right here a suspicion I must interject,
That some of these men who are stalwart and youthful
The best and the highest are prone to neglect.

O true may they be to their fathers and mothers,
And true to the maidens who in them confide;
As served they would be may they aim to serve others,
And each as a bridegroom be worthy his bride.

I take off my hat to this young generation
And cheerfully give to each one my hand;
For they are the sinew and bone of the nation,
The beauty, the joy, and the pride of the land.

*** *** *** ***

Before me are farmers whose crops have been gathered,
And who can rejoice that the hard work is o'er.
They care nothing now for the storms which they weathered,
The heat and the cold and the burdens they bore.

Their work has been hard; their lives have been prosy
In spite of the landscapes which lay at their feet;
In spite of the mornings all purple and rosy;
In spite of the clover so crimson and sweet.

The land which they tilled was both stony and rooty,
And often the oxen were slow to obey;
Along with the meadow and orchard's rich beauty,
The jolt of the plow is remembered today.

How often as soon as the day's work was over,
When all things were hushed but the poor whippoorwill,
They lay, weary, down on the young tender clover
And felt a sweet rest which no sluggard can feel.

They surely are worthy to have recreation
And feel once again the return of life's spring.
O let them enjoy the sweet song and oration
And shout with the children until the woods ring.

*** *** *** ***

Housekeepers are present, the care-laden mothers,
Who sit up and sew while the husbandman sleeps;
They sew up the tears for the children and others;
But sow not the tares which the wicked man reaps.

These women for days have been baking and broiling;
They now spread the feast 'neath the great azure dome
And smile as they see the results of their toiling
In the one great essential of our Harvest Home.

So, talk how they will, use "awful" for "very,"
And "splendid" for "nice," and "lovely" for "fine,"
Their robes smell of spices, their voices are cheery,
And bright their sweet faces with happiness shine.

They may not have followed at high school or college
A course of instruction all laid out by rule,
And yet they have gathered a practical knowledge
Which never is gained while at work in the school.

I place far above theoretical grammar
The science of cooking which these madams know:
There is much in this world which is nothing but glamour—
But real the good things which come from the dough.

*** *** *** ***

Among us are women whose forms are low bending
Beneath the great burden of eighty long years.
The time seems but brief since their voices were blending
In song with young lovers who called them their "dears."

How well they remember the huskings and quiltings
Where they were the maidens so buxom and fair!
How well they recall the coquettings and jiltings
Which they with all mortals were destined to share!

These granddames when young had no little cunning:
They carded the soft wool and scutched the tough flax;
They kept the great loom and the spinning wheel running
And made all the cloth which was worn on their backs.

They followed the footpath which led over mountain
Or down into valley of hemlock and pine.
They gathered forget-me-nots blue by the fountain
And caught the shy trout with their crude hook and line.

As daughters, as sisters, as wives, and as mothers
Their duties these women most nobly performed.
They lived not for self so much as for others
Whose spirits by their loving spirits were warmed.

Their beaux who came courting are here represented
By a dozen survivors now feeble and gray.
They lean on their staves as they walk; yet contented
And cheerful they are as young children at play.

Turn life's pages backward for two generations,
And these were the men of ambition and power
Who hewed from the forest their ample plantations
And met at all times the demands of the hour.

They felled the huge hemlock, the birch, and the pine tree,
The walnut, the chestnut, the beach, and the oak.
They rolled up great log heaps; and many a fine tree
Went down into ashes and up into smoke.

They built themselves cabins, school houses, and churches,
And trained up their children the way they should go.
Instead of their offspring, they spoiled the young birches,
As some of you middle-aged people well know.

Yet once in awhile, at the clearing or logging,
When gin had inflamed and driven him mad,
A stalwart among them inflicted a flogging
On one, peradventure, the best friend he had.

To play with a venomous reptile is risky:
More dangerous far is the snake of the still.
We blame the man less than the poisonous whiskey
Which loosens the tongue while it deadens the will.

It took generations to learn of the evil
Which comes to the home from the use of Rum's bowl:
But now we all know 'tis a wile of the devil
Who uses this method of damning the soul.

Wide rivers these men often crossed without bridges
In hunting the wildcat, the wolf, and the bear.
The sly and fierce panther on green-mantled ridges,
With flint-firing gun, they were ready to dare.

Yet no one was certain on pulling the trigger
Which, he or the beast, was about to expire;
For panthers when wounded for battle were eager,
And flints were struck often without flash of fire.

The young man is proud of his strength; and his glory
Is what he can do, though yet scarcely begun:
The old has just pride in a head that is hoary
And a frame bent by toil which was long ago done.

A good jolly time at this picnic is legal;
The dignified may little children appear;
The aged their strength may renew like the eagle,
By all taking part in the merry good cheer.

Good cheer is a tonic—it makes one live longer—
"Does good like a medicine," Solomon said.
It sweetens the spirit and makes the nerves stronger;
It toughens the muscle and clears up the head.

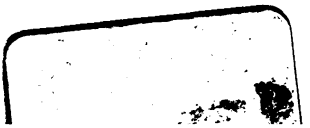
Delight in this excellent day is a duty
We owe to ourselves and also to God:
We ought to be joyful o'er all the rich beauty
Which flames in the sky or up-springs from the sod.

No patience have I with a narrow religion
Which offers a blessing in naught except prayer:
"The joy of the Lord is our strength," and the region
To exercise strength is in life ev'rywhere.

If Jesus were with us, methinks, He would mingle
With innocent children and veteran saints;
Or each of us kindly address, and then single
Out some one afflicted and heal his complaints.

God bless these old folks while their strength is declining,
And while they go halting on down to the tomb.
May clouds as they come show their bright golden lining,
And a light in the valley disperse all its gloom.

And God bless us all, for our poor lives are fleeting
And those now the youngest will soon be the old,
And new generations will come to this meeting
Long after our forms have returned unto mold.

In Nature's green fane we may meet again never,
For Time all remorseless will mow down our ranks:
But O may we gather by Life's limpid river
And sup 'neath the trees all abloom on its banks.

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